

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

BY
ALBERT GNUDTZMANN



STEWART KIDD
MODERN PLAYS
EDITED BY
FRANK SHAY

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Stewart Kidd Plays

THE PROVINCETOWN PLAYS

Edited by GEORGE CRAM COOK and FRANK SHAY

With a foreword by HUTCHINS HAPGOOD

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Send for Complete Dramatic Catalogue

STEWART KIDD COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

CINCINNATI, U. S. A.

STEWART KIDD MODERN PLAYS

Edited by Frank Shay

To The American Foundation for the Blind.

From

Arvid Paulson

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

The above is a list of the

187

articles

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By
ALBERT GNUDTZMANN

Translated from the Danish by Arvid Paulson



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TO
THE MEMORY OF MY FRIEND
RICHARD MANSFIELD 2ND,
WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY,
I DEDICATE THE ENGLISH VERSION OF THIS PLAY.
—A. P.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HAMMELEV, *a public school teacher*

MRS. HAMMELEV, *his wife*

ANTON, *their son*

LOUISE THORSEN

KIRSTEN

The action of the play takes place in the living quarters of the Hammelevs in a Danish country school.

Produced at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen for the first time on the tenth of September, 1903.

THE STAGE

A living-room at the Hammelevs', with low ceiling and antique furniture. In the back-ground two windows, through which is seen a garden. Between the windows an old-fashioned linen closet. By the windows, on the right, a platform with a sewing table. A bird-cage with a canary bird stands on the window-sill; white curtains; a number of flower pots. Doors on each side of the stage. To the right a big chiffonier. Nearer the footlights a smoking-table, above which, on the wall, hangs a pipe-rack with pipes. On the left a sofa; in front of it stands a table with a rocking-chair and a couple of other chairs. Above the sofa hangs a mirror; on each side of the mirror portraits of Luther and Melanchton; underneath these, photographs of members of the family. The room has the stamp of cozy homeliness—sunshine outside—the sun rays pour into the room in broad streams through the windows.

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SCENE I

(*Mrs. Hammelev and Kirsten. They are drinking coffee at the centre table, which is covered with a small tablecloth.*)

KIRSTEN

Yes, Lavst's promised. The carriage will be there, I'm sure. It's all been arranged.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Thank you very much, Kirsten. And remember now, it is the 8.20 train.

KIRSTEN

Oh, yes, yes—

MRS. HAMMELEV (*eagerly*)

And the carriage should be at the station in plenty of time. I should say eight o'clock at the latest. So it must leave here at seven.

KIRSTEN

Oh, it don't take no more than a half hour to get there.

MRS. HAMMELEV

I am always so afraid that something may happen. And if we should come late! You must remember, Kirsten, that he is quite helpless. And in a railroad station, especially, in the midst of people who think only of themselves.

KIRSTEN

Yes—I wonder sometimes how he can travel

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like that, all alone, without gettin' into trouble, the poor boy! How helpless a man is without a pair of eyes to see with!

MRS. HAMMELEV

Everything is in God's power, Kirsten. And then you must know that by this time he has become accustomed to helping himself. It is now seven years since the misfortune came upon him.

KIRSTEN

Heavens! Is it really? Yes, time flies—indeed it does! I remember very well the time when you and Mr. Hammelev took him to the doctor, and you was told that poor Anton was goin' to lose his eyesight. Both me and Furst felt awful sorry over it.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*painfully touched*)

Yes, Kirsten, but—

KIRSTEN (*without interruption*)

It was an awful and terrible thing to think of! Such a nice-lookin' boy as he was! He had that curly hair of his that suited him so fine—and them beautiful eyes of his—oh, what beautiful eyes he had, anyhow! Poor Anton! Yes, we used to always call him "poor little Anton", 'cause he wasn't very strong. But he was a pretty big lad at that time. Wasn't he just goin' to graduate? Let's see—he graduated from high school when—

MRS. HAMMELEV

Twice—two years in succession he failed, and he used to be the first one in his class, and then—(*Pauses.*) But, God be praised, he has

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amounted to something in spite of all. He has turned out to be a very clever boy—although he took up a different profession than we had wanted him to.

KIRSTEN

Yes, both Mr. Hammelev and you wanted him to study to be a minister, didn't you? And what's a musician! And *you* was a minister's daughter!

MRS. HAMMELEV

Musician! But, Kirsten, my son is not an ordinary musician. He is an artist—yes—you know what that means, don't you, Kirsten? He plays in big halls where people gather just to hear music. Have I never read to you what has been said of him in the newspapers?

KIRSTEN

Yes, thanks, and I must say it was a real pleasure and comfort for me to hear, 'specially when it's a person you have no right to expect too much from; that Fate has struck like him and who must bend to the will of our Lord, as long as it's got to be. But it's awful sad to think that His choice should fall on poor Anton. I always thought, when I saw him, that he was made to live in sunshine and light all the time. And to think that he should have to wander in darkness!—as it is written in the Bible.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*half to herself*)

Yes, Kirsten, there was a time when I thought as you do. Many a night I have lain awake, struggling with God for my child. I wouldn't

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let him go until He blessed me. And when I saw that Anton's sight, with every day that passed, grew dimmer and dimmer, there was a moment when I turned against Him, and in my foolishness wanted Him to account for His acts. At times I almost thought it would be best if He would take the child back to Him.

KIRSTEN (*with sincerity*)

Perhaps it would have been best.

MRS. HAMMELEV

No, Kirsten, it wouldn't. And I shall never forgive myself that I once in a dark moment let Anton understand that I did think so. Now it has dawned upon me that God nevertheless has heard my prayers. He has given my son new light; but He has lighted it in the depth of his soul. *There grow flowers and sparkle springs as pure as neither you nor I have imagination to dream of, Kirsten. (Noise outside of voices of children, mingled with the clatter of their wooden shoes.)* I suppose school is over.

KIRSTEN (*rising from her chair*)

Good heavens! Is it that late? Oh, I got to be goin'!

MRS. HAMMELEV

Oh, no. Stay a while, Kirsten. Mr. Hammelev will be in soon. We'll have another cup of coffee.

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SCENE II

(*Hammelev enters from the left. An elderly man with a kindly, somewhat tired expression on his face.*)

MRS. HAMMELEV

Kirsten is here, pa!

HAMMELEV

So I see, mother, I see. (*Goes to Kirsten and shakes hands with her.*) How do you do, Kirsten? I hear that your husband will drive to the station for us to-night. I want to thank you for your kindness.

KIRSTEN

Oh, that's nothin' to thank us for, Mr. Hammelev. It ain't the season of the year when we use our horses much.

HAMMELEV

No, oh no—now that you've got the hay in, I guess you don't. But it isn't the first time we have had reason to thank you and your husband. Since we haven't any horse and carriage, we ought to be thankful that we have such kind and helpful neighbors. (*Goes to the pipe-rack, takes down a pipe, and fills it with tobacco.*) Well, Kirsten, I suppose you know what a great day it was in school to-day?

KIRSTEN

Oh, yes, I can imagine, Mr. Hammelev. It is in a way a day of rejoicin'—we can't say nothin' else. The Lord has dealt severe with you, so we are glad when He helps you along a little and makes it easier for you.

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MRS. HAMMELEV (*who has been serving the coffee, interrupting*)

You'll take a cup of coffee, too, won't you, pa?

HAMMELEV (*who has lighted his pipe*)

Yes, thanks; we can always drink a little coffee. (*Sits, smokes, and drinks his coffee.*)

Yes, you see the cross we have to bear, Kirsten—we ought never to complain of that. (*Good-naturedly.*) At your house you don't complain, anyhow, I don't think. Do you, Kirsten?—You haven't anything to complain of.

KIRSTEN (*knocks under the table, from superstition*)

I'd better knock on wood before it's too late.

HAMMELEV

Yes, do that, Kirsten. Well, I won't say that we have anything to complain of over here, either. We get our daily bread. And now this great joy when our son comes home. We haven't seen him for four years.

KIRSTEN

Is it as long as that?

MRS. HAMMELEV (*to herself*)

Four long years!

HAMMELEV

Yes, it has always been worst for mother, of course. You see, I have the school and the church singing to think of. But she has to sit alone here in this room day after day. Then, of course, her thoughts go far, far off—we all know how it is. I often say to mother: "Mother, I have a hundred little children to take care of every day." That means a hundred little

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hearts and a hundred little brains that I must keep watch over. And so I say to mother, it seems to me as if she ought to be able to keep track of at least herself. But it is easy enough to find fault. Sorrow is a weed that it is not so easy to pull up by the roots.

KIRSTEN

Yes, if I'd had such a misfortune to think of, I don't know what I'd have done.

HAMMELEV

But now mother will get her reward for all she has gone through, poor mother. To-night he'll be here in this room, he whom she is always thinking of. She hasn't even slept during the last half-dozen nights.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*smiling*)

Now you are exaggerating again, pa!

HAMMELEV

Well, well—you haven't had very much sleep. A little with one eye is about all, if we should sum it up. And there has been such a house-cleaning and scrubbing and frying and baking, as if the vicar himself was expected. The boy's room is fixed for him; it is just as it was when he was at home last, excepting, of course, that everything is newly washed and cleaned and polished.

KIRSTEN

But when he ain't able to see it—

HAMMELEV

No, he can't see it. But the blind instinctively feel what we others see. They can, for instance,

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enjoy a beautiful landscape. The color rays work on their skin, you understand, Kirsten. It is just as if they were taking a sort of bath in all the beauty. And then, of course, they have the sense of smell. Well, now—and there are twelve new shirts and twelve pairs of socks for him on his bed. Those he can get a great deal of pleasure from. Would you like to see them, Kirsten?

MRS. HAMMELEV (*somewhat impatiently*)

Oh, that's nothing—

HAMMELEV

Yes, Kirsten, just to make mother feel ashamed, I'll show you how diligent she has been. She knows how to do these things. She has a linen closet that would make many a woman envious.

KIRSTEN

Yes, we sure have to have clothes on our body.

HAMMELEV

Yes, Kirsten; but you and your husband no doubt have more than we. Come along now; I'll show you what mother has made for our boy.

KIRSTEN (*puts away her coffee-cup, rises, shakes hands with both*)

Yes, all right. Well—thank you ever so much for the coffee.

(*All three go out, right. At the same moment are seen, through the windows in the background, Anton Hammelev and Louise Thorsen, approaching by the roadway outside.*)

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SCENE III

(Anton Hammelev and Louise Thorsen enter from the left. Anton is a young man in his twenties. He has the appearance of an artist—face smooth-shaven and hair rather long. In spite of his blindness he moves about in the room without any apparent difficulty. Louise is in her thirties—a weary and somewhat faded and passé woman. It is apparent that she is trying to improve her appearance with the use of powder and paint. She is quite well dressed. She gives the impression of being of an amiable though timid disposition, and she has a sad look in her eyes.)

ANTON (*merrily*)

You never thought, Louise, that I should ever lead you. Did you notice how well I knew the way? And I know where every piece of furniture stands in this room. (*Points.*) There stands mother's sewing-table—and there are father's pipes. Am I not right? You may ask me about every little thing if you wish. I can tell you where every picture hangs on the wall. Do you want to try?

LOUISE (*pleadingly*)

No, Anton, not now.

ANTON

Why not? You haven't lost your courage, have you?

LOUISE

We shouldn't have done this, I think. If you had come alone, you could have explained to your parents much better.

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ANTON (*somewhat impatiently*)

If I could ever get you to understand why I have arranged it as I have! What do you think my parents are, anyhow? Do you think they'll assault me? Assault a defenseless woman—eh?

LOUISE

No, of course not. But—I don't know—when I look about in this room it seems to me as if I had entered it to steal something that doesn't belong to me.

ANTON

Oh, is it that way? Listen now, Louise. Who do you suppose knows the old folks best—you or I?

LOUISE

Why—you, of course, but—

ANTON

Well, then let it be so. Now, don't you think it would be best to let me do as I think fit? (*More quietly.*) I'll tell you, Louise, my parents have hitherto not been used to see anything but a child in me! "Poor little Anton," they always used to call me, even after I had gone through the conservatory. Four years ago, when last I was at home, father couldn't get it into his head that I, like other men, had to shave and get my hair cut. And I was at that time a big chap—nineteen years old. (*In a temper.*) Good God! Am I then but a child! A helpless, unfortunate, poor being, and can I never grow to be like other human beings!

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LOUISE

You who know so much—you are not as badly off as that! And you know it, too, Anton.

ANTON

Yes, God help me, Louise! When one is lacking in one of the senses one is a child, an incomplete specimen, three-fourths of a man or hardly that. But let that be as it may! The fact remains that neither father nor mother in their wildest moments of imagination would think that I might become engaged. And I don't think it would be of any use for me to begin to explain how the whole thing has happened. Even if I should describe you as an angel of God, they would say I was the most foolish being in the world. Just for that very reason they ought to have the chance of seeing for themselves.

LOUISE

If only we hadn't met, Anton! It would have been so much better for you.

ANTON

What nonsense! When once they see you! That's why I wanted you to come with me and surprise them.

LOUISE

Oh, God! I only wish I was twenty miles from here. I don't even know what to say to them.

ANTON

You don't need to say anything at all. I'll talk for you; you'll see. I'll say: "Look here, father and mother, this is Louise. She is the woman to whom I owe everything. If it hadn't been

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for her I wouldn't be a human being with a cheery outlook on life—I wouldn't care to live. I myself have never seen her, but I know so well how she looks. She is fair as the day, and she has a dimple in either cheek—they are just like a couple of little rills where the sunbeams play hide-and-seek. She has also a little bent-up nose—quite a resolute little nose—that always points in the right direction, just like a compass needle. But what is most beautiful about her are her eyes; they are so deep, and yet so clear; one feels so sure there is something beyond their depth—but one can't see it. And the other little things about her—can't you see for yourself how fine and nice and good she is?"

LOUISE (*pained*)

Oh, Anton, but I don't look like that!

ANTON

Yes, that is how you do look. I know it. (*Takes hold of both her hands.*) And yet I can't show them your warm, faithful heart; they'll have to learn to know that little by little.

LOUISE

If you would only not make so much of me, Anton! If one of us has anything to be grateful for, it is I. And you know I haven't hidden anything from you.

ANTON (*drops her hands; seriously*)

You had nothing to hide, Louise. I know you have had a hard time. But pure metal can't be spoiled, and you have come out of it all

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unstained—with your beautiful eyes and your good heart. Perhaps you have cried a great deal. Perhaps others can see the traces in your face—if so, it is an advantage to me to be blind. (*Listens.*) But listen! I can hear the old folks upstairs. I think, perhaps it would be best, if you went out for a second; you need only go outside till I call you. You see—I think I ought to be alone with them the very first moments.

LOUISE (*close to him; entreating him*)

Anton—don't you want me to leave you now? Shan't I—

ANTON (*impatiently*)

You must do as I say. Be a sensible girl—don't be hysterical. Now go, please.

LOUISE (*going out to the left*)

I'll do as you wish me to. But if you regret it, remember I told you you shouldn't do it.

(*Anton stands for a moment listening to the steps of his parents overhead. Then he hides himself behind the door to the right, which opens at the same moment.*)

SCENE IV

(*Kirsten, Mrs. Hammelev, and Hammelev enter from the right.*)

KIRSTEN

Yes, Lavst will be there in plenty of time to-night, I promise.

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MRS. HAMMELEV

Thank you, Kirsten. You understand, we are a little nervous. But what is—

ANTON (*coming forward with open arms*)

Mother!

MRS. HAMMELEV (*overwhelmed; sobbing*)

Anton! (*She throws herself on his bosom and kisses him passionately.*) Oh, Anton, Anton—

HAMMELEV (*who, in his excitement, has taken the pipe from his mouth*)

But, Anton, dear—we didn't expect you until to-night!

ANTON

Yes, but "poor little Anton" had a notion to surprise you. So we took—so I took an earlier train. (*He feels with one hand in the air, while holding his mother tightly pressed to his bosom with the other.*) How do you do, father!

HAMMELEV (*pressing his hand*)

How are you, dear boy?

KIRSTEN

Well, I guess I ought to say how do you do, too. I am Kirsten, Lavst's wife.

ANTON (*lets go his mother's hand and presses Kirsten's hand in a faltering manner*)

How do you do, Kirsten. I suppose everything is the same with you as ever?

KIRSTEN

Yes, thank the Lord!

HAMMELEV

But how did you ever get out here, Anton? Didn't anybody come with you?

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ANTON (*somewhat embarrassed*)

No—well—yes, you see I know the way. And
—yes, I'll tell you—

KIRSTEN

Well, I don't want to disturb you no longer,
and there's no need of no carriage goin' to the
station to-night, I guess.

HAMMELEV

No, I don't think so, Kirsten. But thank you
just the same for your willingness. Good-bye!
And give my regards to your husband!

KIRSTEN

Good-bye! (*Shakes hands and goes out to the
right.*)

ANTON

Why don't you say something, mother? Was
it too much of a surprise?

MRS. HAMMELEV (*moves her hand to her heart;
smiles*)

Yes, it was a bit sudden—but now . . . Oh,
Anton—when you are here, you know—don't
you know . . . And how well and happy you
look!

KIRSTEN (*puts her head inside the door*)

Excuse me. I just wanted to tell you there is
a strange lady standin' outside here.

HAMMELEV (*slightly annoyed*)

A strange lady! What does she want, I wonder?
Tell her to come in!

KIRSTEN (*calls*)

Yes, you can come in, if you want to. (*She
goes out.*)

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SCENE V

(Louise comes from the left and remains standing right, inside the door.)

HAMMELEV *(goes towards her)*

You wish to speak with me?

LOUISE *(falteringly, embarrassed)*

Yes—but I thought—perhaps I—ought not to—

ANTON

Why, of course you should. *(He feels his way to her, takes her by the hand, and leads her out into the room; the parents seem to be shocked.)*

I wanted to tell you first, but as it now has happened differently than I had thought—here is the woman who has helped me to find the way out here to-day. And she has done more than that: she has led me through the darkest moments of my life.

MRS HAMMELEV *(who, in a glance, has taken in Louise; in a voice of anxiety)*

Anton—what does this mean?

ANTON

It means, father and mother, that in the last two years she and I have been one. And we will never separate from each other.

HAMMELEV *(with strained kindness)*

So—so you are engaged, poor little Anton? You haven't written and told us anything about it.

ANTON

I didn't want you to worry over me—to know

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that I—helpless as I was—had bound myself to another human being. I wanted you to *see* her first. (*Moved.*) For I knew that in the same moment that you saw her, you'd understand it is for our mutual happiness. Isn't that true when she has chosen to love me? As fine and beautiful as she is! You must understand how much she thinks of me. But you needn't fear for her sake, I feel sure. I can make her happy; and for her it is happiness to be able to give of her full, rich heart—to give to one who longs with all his soul for sun and light—as I do.

MRS. HAMMELEV

I think, if we should speak of the richness of heart, that few have as much to give away as you have, Anton.

ANTON

No, no! don't compare me with her. Remember—for her the whole world lies open; she need but stretch out her arms. But I—I have nothing to give up, nothing to offer. And there is nobody who asks anything from me, anyhow. Nature has now once for all—it seems to me—given me the right to be a bit selfish . . .

HAMMELEV

We had thought that—

ANTON

Yes, father, I might have known that this would come as a great surprise to you. And I know that before long you will love Louise as much as I myself do.

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HAMMELEV

Louise—so that's her name—your . . . And her last name, if I may ask?

LOUISE

Thorsen.

HAMMELEV

Louise Thorsen—oh, yes . . . (*Heartily.*) Well, well, my dear Anton—and you also, my dear—Louise Thorsen, I suppose I ought to wish you all sorts of health and happiness. (*Approaches Anton with extended hand.*)

MRS HAMMELEV (*goes between them*)

Hammelev—I think you first ought to let us speak with the young lady. (*With an emotion that she can hardly conceal.*) May I only say this: Anton knows that I, too, wish him happiness—that nobody could wish him more happiness than I—but it is not more than right that I learn to know her a little better before I—

ANTON (*quietly*)

Of course you may, mother.

MRS. HAMMELEV

You must understand me rightly, Anton. Father and I have been waiting for months for the happy day when you would come home. We spoke of it when we sat here the other evening—we thought of when you would step inside the door—we thought of how it would be with all of us together, the three of us. Now the whole thing will have to be changed. I can't quite reconcile myself to it at once. Therefore, I want to have a chance to learn to

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know her first—she, whom you have chosen for yourself.

ANTON

Yes, mother, since you look at it that way—I think myself it is the best way. For I know very well that when you have talked with her ten minutes you'll love her as if you had known her for many years. Father and I will take a walk in the garden in the meantime.

HAMMELEV

Anton ought to go up to his room, too. But you ought to show him that yourself, mother.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*nervously*)

Do as you like. I—

ANTON (*merrily*)

Let's go out in the garden. I am longing to find out how much the big pear tree has grown that I planted out there myself when I still had my sight. But I tell you this, mother: you mustn't make Louise regret that she cares for me, poor mole. For if I lose her, I'll never find my way any more in life. (*Hammelev and Anton go out.*)

SCENE VI

MRS. HAMMELEV

Now we'll have a talk, we two—it is necessary. You may take off your things—the large hat—the coat. (*Louise takes her coat and hat off and puts them away. She is dressed in a plain, simple dress.*) Yes—I like you so much better without those things on. Now sit down here

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at the table—right here in front of me. (*They both of them sit down.*) What I am going to tell you now may hurt you. But I trust you understand that nobody could love Anton any more than his mother. Therefore I want to speak openly to you.

LOUISE (*bows down her head*)

I suppose you want me to call it off with him.

MRS. HAMMELEV

I had meant to ask you whether you yourself think that you are the kind of wife he ought to have. I don't know you, of course. But I know him, and I know that he deserves to have a good woman and a woman who is pure. Can you stand before the face of God and say that you are that? You need not answer me. It is God who awaits your answer.

LOUISE (*slowly*)

I know very well I haven't always been what I should have been.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*mildly*)

None of us have. But you must let your own conscience decide whether you can stand with raised head as my son's bride. If you can not, I beg of you to give him up. Yes, in such a case you *must*. Could you expect me to ask anything else of you?

LOUISE (*rocking back and forth in great agony*)

I have been so fond of Anton.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Yes, poor girl! You mustn't think I am so hard-hearted that I don't feel sorry for you.

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But life puts its mark on each one of us. And you have received yours. I saw it on you at once.

LOUISE

I have often regretted that I gave Anton my promise. I am sorry for his sake. I have often thought that perhaps it would dawn on him some day that I wasn't fit for him. And I promised myself solemnly—if such a day should come—he should be free from me at once.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Perhaps—if you had enough strength left. But what about all the years you had taken away from him in the meantime?

LOUISE

I felt that way because he cared for me and wanted to have me near him.

MRS. HAMMELEV

But you have no right to think anything like that. We have no right to masquerade, to pretend we are what we are not. And you must remember that my son can't form an opinion for himself of human beings in the same way that we can.

LOUISE (*bravely*)

You mustn't think, Mrs. Hammelev, that I have hidden anything from Anton.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Hidden! To leave things untold is the same as to hide.

LOUISE

I have told him everything that I have been—that I was once—

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MRS. HAMMELEV (*sharply*)

A fallen woman!

LOUISE (*bending herself down in silence, as if being struck*)

That is a word which is not used by oneself about oneself. (*With strong emotion.*) Yet on the very first day we met I told him I should bring shame and sorrow to him. I told him I had done things that I couldn't even tell him about, and that I wasn't worthy of walking by his side in the street.

MRS. HAMMELEV

You did tell him that?

LOUISE

As true as there is a God! I have told him everything. Oh, but he—he only smiled. He understood so well, he said, that I had gone through so many things. But when a woman had the strength to rise again, it tended to prove that she had the real stuff in her—that's what he said. Then it seemed to him also as if it, in a way, was a sort of counter-balance to his being such a wretched human being. In a way, you understand. For we each had our own misfortune to bear.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*passionately*)

Don't you dare to compare his misfortune with yours! God knows my poor boy can not be blamed for what has befallen him. Whereas you have been a bad and weak woman. You have brought your sin and shame upon yourself, and you can not wash yourself clean of it now. I am not judging you—don't think that!

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

But how could you come out here with him? How could you think that we, his parents, could look on quietly and see him throw himself away on a—a woman who—who was unworthy of him?

LOUISE

Oh, God! I didn't think so. I didn't think so. I begged him again and again to go alone. But he wouldn't listen to me; he wasn't satisfied until I promised to go with him. And he kept on saying: "When they only see how much you are to me, they will have to like you as much as I do." And then—then—I don't know—then there were moments when I hoped myself it would be as he hoped it would.

MRS. HAMMELEV

You ought to have known that, in spite of telling him about your life, you are still deceiving him; that everybody else can see with their eyes what he can't! You also have a bad conscience. It is for that reason you have tried to fix yourself up. But can't you understand that you are thus holding up my poor little boy as a target for fun-making and mockery and pity?

LOUISE (*struggling with her tears*)

He told me to fix myself up so that you might like me. I never thought—(*suddenly taking hold of Mrs. Hammelev's hand.*) You must believe me! I did it all with the best of intentions.

MRS. HAMMELEV

I readily believe that. But if you really loved Anton, I do not understand why you couldn't

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

see that you would drag him down with you. But there must be an end to this now. You must give him up.

LOUISE (*in a low voice*)

Give up! Yes, I suppose I must—I wouldn't think of standing between him and his parents. Yes, I'll—I'll tell him we must part.

MRS. HAMMELEV

No. You shan't do that. You need but leave quietly. I'll speak myself to my son.

LOUISE

You speak to him! Yes—if you could only get him to listen. But I know him. He'll want me back, anyway. Do you know that I left him once? No—how could you know that!—

MRS. HAMMELEV

You were—you were going to—leave him!

LOUISE

I wanted to give him back his liberty, as you want me to give it to him now. I explained my reasons for doing it in a letter to him—I have learned the alphabet of the blind. Then I moved to some relatives of mine that I had never spoken to him of. The next day he had found out where I was and came to me.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Yes, I realize that you have understood how to make him attached to you. It will be a blow to him—yes, I don't reproach you.

LOUISE

Reproach me!

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

MRS. HAMMELEV

I tell you, I don't blame you. And if I could give you a helping hand, so that both you and my son could become happy and contented, I would do so. But it wouldn't be right for me to think of anything else but my son's future. Remember that I am so much older than you are and have had so many more years' experience of life. And I have learned that one cannot build a house on sand or dirt.

LOUISE (*rising*)

Anton's future shan't be built on such a foundation. It is better for us—it is better for him to have the sorrow of losing me now. And this time it shall be for ever. There are places where he won't be able to find me.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Are you going upstairs to talk to him now?

LOUISE (*nods*)

Yes, that is one of the conditions I want to make.

MRS. HAMMELEV

You must believe me—I am doing this with the best of intentions. It is only because I love Anton so much.

LOUISE (*with a sorrowful nod*)

I know. When one loves some one—

MRS. HAMMELEV (*takes Louise's hand*)

But one thing you must promise me. You must be sensible. You mustn't do anything rash or foolish. Think of Anton. His life is dark enough as it is.

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

LOUISE

I have already taken into consideration everything. Almost as long as I have known Anton have I had on my mind to do what I am going to do now. I shall go—far away—that's all. And then neither you nor Anton will have to see me any more. (*She goes out to the right. Mrs. Hammelev walks about the room restlessly for a moment; then she seats herself at the table in deep thought.*)

SCENE VII

(*Hammelev enters from the right.*)

HAMMELEV

Well, I showed Anton up to the room, mother. I thought he'd long to see—to come up there. If you had only seen how he went around and felt everything! "Oh, God!" he exclaimed, "there hangs the little rack." And he felt all the books. "There is my 'Ivanhoe'—and there is Dickens' 'Oliver Twist'; and there 'The Last of the Mohicans'!" He felt all of them by their backs. But the shirts and the socks—you could have saved yourself the trouble of making them, Mother.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Why?

HAMMELEV

A person can never get enough of such things, of course, in a way. But he is well looked after in this respect. She, his sweetheart, has sewn and fixed and looked after everything for him.

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

She works, by the way, in a dressmaking establishment.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*with an expression of surprise*)
She works—she works at a dressmaker's!

HAMMELEV

Yes—in one of those large department stores in Copenhagen. She is in charge of the dress-making department. She makes good money, too, he says.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*as before*)
Good for her!

HAMMELEV

And a good thing for him, too. How would they have got along otherwise?

MRS. HAMMELEV

I should hope Anton does not have to receive anything from anybody.

HAMMELEV

But he had to do so once. Do you know who kept him alive? When he took lessons from that professor, you know. We thought he was living with that friend of his he wrote about.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Wasn't he?

HAMMELEV

Well, yes—yes, he was, in a way. But his friend most of the time wears skirts, and her name is Louise Thorsen. And it was she who took care of him the best way she could.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*passionately*)

And stole his youth. For if they shared things

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

with each other, it must have meant that they lived together.

HAMMELEV

Yes—and what is there to be said? She is a woman and he a man. And, besides, he is an artist. So we ought not to judge, I think.

MRS. HAMMELEV

But we must be allowed to have our opinions. We have only this one child. And he is in need of parental love more than other children.

HAMMELEV

Yes, mother dear, but I think it has been a great fortune for him to have found her. What can *we* do for him, we two old cronies? We shall soon have enough to do straightening out our own affairs until we meet up there with the great Doctor who opens all eyes. And when we have gone, who would he then have to cling to? No—a young woman like her is what a man like him needs. And the old doctor said that—thank God—should he get children, there was no danger that his affliction would be hereditary.

MRS. HAMMELEV

But there are greater afflictions that *can* be inherited.

HAMMELEV

Yes, I can see that you are not very pleased with the whole thing. Before she took off her coat it seemed to me, too, as if she looked a bit too “cityfied.” But I think she really is a good girl.

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

SCENE VIII

(Anton and Louise come from the right.)

ANTON *(half outside)*

No, Louise, you can't go away like this. If I can't make you stay, mother must try to. *(He pulls her, in spite of her opposition, into the room.)* Have you ever heard anything like it? Louise wants to go back to the city to-night.

LOUISE

Yes, I must, Anton. I didn't have the courage to tell you before. But now—I feel that I know your parents—and . . .

ANTON

Know—know—one can't learn to know anybody in an hour. Anyhow, it's strange that your employer wants you to return at once. And just on this occasion! Before, you have always been able to get off whenever you wanted to be with me.

LOUISE

I have asked to be free too often, dear Anton. Now, you see, they must have grown tired of it in the store. I want to tell you right now that hereafter I am afraid we shall not be able to be together as often as before.

ANTON

Well, then we must get married. To think that you should be the slave of the yardstick! Now I'll dictate a letter for you. I'll say that you cannot be back until the day after tomorrow at the earliest.

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

LOUISE

No, it won't do, Anton—you must not ask me to do it.

ANTON

But help me, then, father and mother. Can you look on quietly and silently while your daughter-in-law, who has hardly put her foot inside your door, wants to disappear again?

HAMMELEV

No, we want, of course, to—

MRS. HAMMELEV

I think you had best let Louise go, Anton. You mustn't let her take the risk of losing her position.

ANTON

And you say that, mother! But don't you know how I had looked forward to this day—when you would see her—and learn to love her and—

MRS. HAMMELEV

You must be sensible, Anton. It might influence your future if she—

ANTON

The future! Always the future, always to-morrow and again to-morrow, and please wait like a good child! But God have mercy, I am of course, unreasonable. Go, Louise, go! Hurry, that you will not be late for the train!

LOUISE (*sadly*)

Are you angry with me now, Anton?

ANTON (*softly*)

With you—no! I am a bit angry, I suppose.

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

But not with you. I want to tell you this, however, that I will let you go only on one condition: that you soon take a long vacation. And then we'll come out here again, both of us. Will you promise me that, Louise?

LOUISE (*softly patting his hand*)

There shall soon be happiness for both of us, Anton.

ANTON

Y-e-s—I couldn't be angry with you now. So go upstairs to my room. At the very top of my traveling bag you'll find a little package. Bring it down to me. There is something in it for you. It was my intention not to give it to you until to-night. But as long as you can't wait—

LOUISE

You shouldn't spend your money on buying presents for me.

ANTON

What! I don't lose anything by it. I don't ruin myself by it, do I?

LOUISE

But I would rather you didn't give me anything.

ANTON

Is it your intention to make me real angry—seriously angry? I can't understand what ails you to-day. My parents have seen an engaged couple before. Or do you think, perhaps, that they, in their peasant simplicity, may take offense?

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

LOUISE

No, but—

ANTON

Well, if you want to leave at once, then go. And take all the time you want while you are upstairs. Five minutes, if you like. There is something I want to speak to mother about in the meantime. Can you find your way to the room?

HAMMELEV

I'll show Louise the way. At the same time I'll show her the room where she was to have slept, if she had stayed over night.

ANTON

Five minutes, Louise. But no longer. We have yet a few hours till you have to leave for the train. And we will be very greedy of these two hours—we four.

LOUISE (*bends over him and kisses him*)

Anton, dear, you know I have always wished to do what was best for you. Whatever may happen or whatever I may do, you must always believe in me. Do you hear, Anton—always!

(*Louise and Hammelev go out, right.*)

SCENE IX

ANTON

It was only this I wished to tell you, mother: I know that you have made Louise feel sad.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*with anxiety*)

Has she then told you?—

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

ANTON

She has told me nothing; but don't you think I know her voice? And there was a false note vibrating in it. Have you anything against her? If you have—tell me.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*avoiding the question*)

Why, I scarcely know her—

ANTON

Then I can only think that you are worried on account of me. It doesn't seem to you that I ought to take the responsibility of founding a family—I who have to stumble along and feel my way like a mole here in this pitiful world.

MRS. HAMMELEV

But, my dear boy, how can you say so!

ANTON

Oh, yes, *it is that*. What else could it be? But now I want to tell you one thing. You who have your sight often think of us blind ones as of feeble-minded beings. We know nothing, we are fit for nothing. But that is where you are mistaken. We are just like other human beings: we can think and dream, can love and hate just like others. You know—sometimes when I stand before an audience, it seems to me as if I were all alone. There is nobody whose soul or thoughts reach me; nobody who can disturb me. I am like the fertile soil that is left to take care of itself; there is an abundance of sunshine saved within me. That is why I feel life so strongly—like something warm and fruitful within me. And it is this feeling that

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

gives me faith; that tells me I have a future awaiting me in spite of all.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Thank God for that, Anton! Thank God for that!

ANTON

But perhaps you mean to say that what Louise feels for me is nothing but pity; that she will cease to care sooner or later. If that is what you think, I want to tell you something—I want to tell you how we first learned to know each other.

MRS. HAMMELEV

No, you need not tell me that, Anton.

ANTON

But I want you to listen to me. You remember, no doubt, a few years ago—I had graduated from the conservatory—had had the best of teachers—and the time came for me when I had to get something to do. But nobody wished to have anything to do with a blind musician—who could not see. So I had to take a position out of town—

MRS. HAMMELEV

In the café, yes.

ANTON

Should we, perhaps, rather say in the barroom. Or in a place still worse. All around me nothing but rough, vulgar, and drunken talk of wanton women and beasts of men. And 'midst all this noise and the smell of liquor I had to sit and play music that was disgusting to me—only for the alms that they cared to throw to me. For

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

it was for alms that I played. Right above the place where I sat there was nailed a sign: "Don't forget the blind musician!"—

MRS. HAMMELEV

My poor boy! My poor, poor boy!—

ANTON

It was then that I wrote to you; I had to have a human being to whom I could open my heart. It was for that reason I didn't or couldn't spare your feelings.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Nobody could be nearer to you than your mother.

ANTON

Do you remember how you answered me? That I should hope and trust that I might come to the place where all eyes are opened and all tears are dried.

MRS. HAMMELEV

I had fought with God over you. But I thought He wouldn't listen to my prayers—not as I wished Him to do. It was then I began to think there was only one consolation.

ANTON (*nodding*)

Death—yes. What else could there have been? Death is charitable, if one will only wait for it. But to wait—that was what seemed so hard to me—

MRS. HAMMELEV

For God's sake, Anton.

ANTON

Don't take it so to heart, mother; it is over

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

now—long ago. But that evening, on going home, I searched my way down to the river. Of what importance in life could a poor blind musician ever be? And the Lord would not have turned me away if I had come a little too early to Him, I don't believe.

MRS. HAMMELEV

God have mercy! And I could be at rest here at home. Why didn't I know, why couldn't I have thought, that you were so much in need!

ANTON

Probably because nothing happened; because nothing was meant to happen. It is strange to think how often a mere chance can change a whole life. Chance would have it that evening that I went astray and passed through streets where I had never been before. I had fumbled around about an hour's time when I felt somebody touch my hand, and a woman's voice asked whether I had trouble in finding my way. I have become used to judging people by their voices, and I said to myself at once: "Here is one who is also in despair and who, like you, is wishing for a river, too." And I opened my heart to her.

MRS. HAMMELEV

And that woman—that—was—

ANTON

That was Louise—yes. And I wasn't mistaken in her. She had gone through many things; as much as I had. But she didn't look for the river any more. She had got over that. Well, I went home with her to her little room.

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

She lived in a hall-room. In the daytime she went out sewing.

MRS. HAMMELEV

You went home with her—in the middle of the night!

ANTON (*with a smile*)

Yes, mother. I am not used to finding much difference between day and night. To me it is all one color. And she dared not let me go. Who knows—perhaps I might have found the river, anyhow, then. So she sat up all night and talked to me about life and its joys.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Life and its joys. And I—

ANTON

Yes, mother—that you have given to me. Well, that was not all she did. She didn't only *speak* to me. She gave me a place to sleep and she gave me food to eat, so that I shouldn't have to play any more in the barroom. For fourteen days she shared every penny of her wages with me. And in the afternoon, when she came home from her work, we went out together to look for a position for me. She advertised and put in applications for me, and—thank God! at last I got a position as an organist. Then came the stipend and then the rest. And during all my struggles she remained by my side.

MRS. HAMMERLEV (*tenderly*)

She has been much to you, Anton.

ANTON

She has been everything to me, mother, every-

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

thing. Should anybody take her away from me, they'll take my life at the same time.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*frightened, agonized*)

Anton—Oh, no—

ANTON

Yes, for I would believe God had regretted that He did not let me go into the river that night, after all. (*He rises and gropes his way.*) It's strange—it seems to me as if the room suddenly had become so different. It is just as if I wasn't at home here any more. Isn't that Louise's steps I hear above me now?

SCENE X

(*Hammelev comes from the right with a little package.*)

HAMMELEV

Louise asked me to give you her regards, and say—

ANTON (*full of anxiety*)

Asked you to—to say—what?

HAMMELEV (*gives him the package*)

And she asked me to give you this.

ANTON (*takes it*)

Thanks—it is the rings. I have bought rings for both of us. Now I must give it to her at once. I hadn't intended to do it otherwise until tonight. But why doesn't she come?

HAMMELEV

She is gone to the station.

MRS. HAMMELEV (*screams*)

To the station?

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

HAMMELEV (*somewhat surprised*)

Yes—she thought it would be better to—she wanted to spare Anton from saying farewell.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Anton, Anton! She must not go! Oh, God! It is I—it is I who have—she'll never come back—no, never. (*She wants to run out.*)

ANTON (*puts himself intuitively in her way*)

Let me go, mother. I'll stop her. She wouldn't heed your voice, I fear. (*Goes to the door, but turns on the threshold.*) For I suppose you want us to come back—don't you?

MRS. HAMMELEV (*as if in a trance*)

Yes—yes—and never again—never again—

(*Anton goes out, left. Mrs. Hammelev has sunk down on a chair. It is as if something had suddenly broken within her, for she bursts into tears.*)

HAMMELEV (*goes over to her; he pats her head and hair*)

There—there, mother dear. You loved him too much. Mothers are the only ones who can love so much that they can kill with love. (*He goes to the window and looks out.*) He runs so safely there on the road, as if he still had his sight. Now he stops and calls her. She turns.

MRS. HAMMELEV

Are they coming back?

HAMMELEV

Of course they are coming. Now they are speaking to each other. Of course they are coming.

EYES THAT CANNOT SEE

MRS. HAMMELEV

Not to me. I have lost Anton for ever.

HAMMELEV (*doesn't hear her*)

So that was the trip to the city. (*Goes to open the door.*) Come right in, please. (*Anton and Louise enter.*) Well, Louise—I may call you Louise, may I not? You came to stay, anyhow.

ANTON (*quietly*)

Louise will stay—yes. Mother will ask her—won't you, mother?

MRS. HAMMELEV

Yes, my boy. Now I beg her to stay. And, what's more—that she will always remain with you.

ANTON (*feeling his way*)

Where are you, mother? (*He turns intuitively to Louise and takes hold of her.*) There—what? No, it's you, Louise, isn't it? (*He pulls her close to himself and is entirely taken up with her. Mrs. Hammelev, who had stretched out her arms toward him, lets them sink with an expression of grief on her face.*)

HAMMELEV (*seeing it*)

Yes, mother dear, now you must be content with me. (*Puts his arms around her waist.*)

MRS. HAMMELEV

He finds me no longer. We drift from each other in the darkness. How much evil we can do where we wish to do only good!

HAMMELEV

It is we who have been blind, mother dear.
It is we who cannot see. . . .

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